

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 SS-15 PM-07 L-03 EB-11 EUR-25 INR-10 SAJ-01

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4966

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 8322

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E.O. 11652 (GDS)

TAGS: PFOR/EGEN/OCON/JA

SUBJECT: NIXON/TANAKA SUMMIT BACKGROUND PAPER -8:
JAPAN AS A REGIONAL POWER

1. FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE JAPAN'S ROLE IN ASIA WILL
CONTINUE TO BE HEAVILY WEIGHTED ON ECONOMIC SIDE
AS VARIETY OF TRENDS LEND ADDITIONAL WEIGHT TO
JAPAN'S ECONOMIC ASCENDANCY IN REGION. VALUE OF
JAPAN'S TRADE IN EAST ASIA GREW DURING PAST YEAR,
PARTICULARLY ON IMPORT SIDE, IN RESPONSE TO COM-
MODITY PRICE INCREASES, INCREASED RAW MATERIAL
REQUIREMENTS AND TRADE LIBERALIZATION STEPS,
THOUGH SHARE OF REGION IN JAPAN'S TOTAL TRADE
DECLINED SLIGHTLY. OVERSEAS PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN
REGION ALSO EXPANDED SIGNIFICANTLY, ESPECIALLY IN
ENERGY AND RAW MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND
LABOR-INTENSIVE INDUSTRIES. GOJ ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS LIKEWISE INCREASED. PARTLY IN
RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS FROM SEA COUNTRIES ABOUT
JAPANESE BUSINESS PRACTICES AND TO JAPANESE
CONCERNS OVER DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE OIL SUPPLIES,
GOJ RECENTLY ANNOUNCED MAJOR (AND UNTIED) LOANS TO
THAILAND, BURMA AND INDONESIA.

2. GOJ IS STILL GROPING FOR MORE SUBSTANTIAL AND

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VISIBLE REGIONAL POLITICAL ROLE, IDEALLY WITHIN

MULTI-LATERAL CONTEXT. JAPAN'S ECONOMIC PROWESS, NATIONALIST SENTIMENT, SENSITIVITY TO INTENSIFIED RUSSIAN AND CHINESE DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY IN EAST ASIA, DIMINISHED TENSIONS IN AREA, AND PRIME MINISTER TANAKA'S EVIDENT DESIRE TO PROJECT IMAGE OF ACTIVISM AND STATESMANSHIP ALL TEND TO FUEL THIS QUEST FOR GREATER REGIONAL STATUS AND RESPONSIBILITY. NATURE OF JAPAN'S FUTURE POLITICAL ROLE IN ASIA REMAINS, HOWEVER, ELUSIVE. INITIATIVES HAVE BEEN LARGEY CONFINED TO VAGUE AND TENTATIVE SUGGESTIONS REGARDING POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES, E.G. CAUTIOUS REFERENCE IN TANAKA'S JANUARY ADDRESS TO DIET TO POSSIBLE UTILITY OF ASIAN CONFERENCE TO CONSIDER MEANS OF CONSOLIDATING PEACE IN REGION. FACT THAT THESE SUGGESTIONS HAVE EVOKED LITTLE POSITIVE RESPONSE STRENGTHENS FORCE OF OTHER INHIBITIONS, SUCH AS (A) UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT CHINESE ATTITUDES TOWARD JAPAN'S REGIONAL ACTIVITIES, (B) AWARENESS THAT SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES REMAIN SUSPICIOUS OF JAPANESE POLITICAL ASSERTIVENESS AND ARE INCLINED TO DEFER CONSIDERATION OF PLANS FOR NEW REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS EMBRACING CHINA UNTIL THEY DEFINE THEIR OWN FUTURE RELATIONS WITH PRC AND (C) RECOGNITION OF DIFFICULTIES THAT WOULD ATTEND ANY EFFORT TO CREATE BROAD REGIONAL POLITICAL FORUM INCLUDING MAJOR POWERS AS LONG AS SINO-SOVIET CONFLICT PERSISTS.

3. THESE CONSIDERATIONS BEAR DIRECTLY ON JAPAN'S APPROACH TO ASPAC AND POSSIBLE CREATION OF SUCCESSOR ORGANIZATION. MORIBUND STATUS OF ASPAC IS SOURCE OF SOME RELIEF TO GOI, AS IS FACT THAT OTHERS, MOST NOTABLY AUSTRALIANS, TOOK INITIATIVE TO QTE PUT IT TO SLEEP UNQTE. IN TERMS OF FINDING SUITABLE SUCCESSOR ORGANIZATION TO EXPRESS AND SYMBOLIZE JAPAN'S REGIONAL POLITICAL ROLE, LIVELIEST CURRENT POSSIBILITY INVOLVES EXPANDING MEMBERSHIP OF SOUTHEAST AFIA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO INCLUDE AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND. FONMIN OHIRA AND VICE MIN HOGEN HAVE BOTH COMMENTED FAVORABLY ON THIS POSSIBILITY, PERHAPS IN PART BECAUSE THEY WOULD

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WELCOME ADDITIONAL DONOR NATIONS IN SEAMED. WORKING LEVEL FONOFF OFFICIALS REMAIN MORE CIRCUMSPECT DUE POSSIBLY TO RELUCTANCE TO SEE JAPAN'S INFLUENCE IN THIS FORUM DILUTED, AND TO FEARS THAT THIS STEP WOULD INVITE SIMILAR REQUESTS FOR ADMISSION FROM OTHER STATES LIKE SOUTH KOREA AND INDIA WHOSE PRESENCE THEY WOULD NOT WELCOME.

4. JAPAN HAS LONG REGARDED ITSELF AS POTENTIAL AGENT OF RECONCILIATION IN DIVIDED COUNTRY DISPUTES. WITH MOVEMENT TOWARD DETENTE IN ASIA, GOJ HAS BEEN RE-EXAMINING NATURE OF ITS OFFICIAL RELATIONS WITH BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM AND NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA. PRESS AND OPPOSITION REPEATEDLY HAVE CALLED FOR EQUIDISTANT RELATIONS WITH RESPECTIVE HALVES OF THOSE DIVIDED STATES. GOJ HAS CONSULTED US ON SUB-STANCE AND TIMING OF ITS MOVES TOWARD HANOI AND PYONGYANG, AND HAS DISPLAYED CONSIDERABLE SENSITIVITY TO OUR OWN INTERESTS AND THOSE OF SAIGON AND SEOUL. NEVERTHELESS, FOR BOTH COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL REASONS GOJ WILL NOW ACCELERATE ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH NORTH VIETNAM, AND TO LESSER EXTENT WITH NORTH KOREA. SUMMIT WILL OFFER US OPPORTUNITY TO COORDINATE OUR APPROACHES TO THESE PROBLEM AREAS, AND TO URGE JAPANESE TO PHASE MOVEMENT TOWARD EXPANDED RELATIONS WITH PYONGYANG IN SUCH WAY AS TO ENCOURAGE RECEPROCAL TREATMENT OF SEOUL BY MAJOR COMMUNIST POWERS.

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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5. STIMULATED IN PART BY ANTICIPATED US REQUESTS FOR
GREATER SHARING OF REGIONAL SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES,
THERE IS CERTAIN AMOUNT OF THOUGHT BEING
GIVEN WITHIN GOJ TO WAYS OF MODESTLY EXTENDING
JAPAN'S REGIONAL SECURITY ROLE, E.G. EXPANSION OF
AREAS IN WHICH MSDF REGULARLY CONDUCTS PATROLS.
THIS PROPOSAL HAS NOT SURFACED PUBLICLY. IT WILL
INEVITABLY INVITE CRITICISM ON CONSTITUTIONAL AND
POLITICAL GROUNDS. IT IS HIGHLY QUESTIONABLE
WHETHER GOJ, GIVEN SHAKY CHARACTER OF TANAKA
ADMINISTRATION'S SUPPORT AT HOME, COULD SWIFTLY
MANAGE TO MOBILIZE REQUISITE CONSENSUS FOR SUCH

MEASURE EVEN IN EVENT REGIONAL NEIGHBORS DID NOT RESPOND CRITICALLY. NEAR CERTAINTY OF ADVERSE REACTIONS FROM WITHIN REGION WILL DOUBTLESS INSURE THAT GOJ QTE MAKES HASTE SLOWLY UNQTE ON ANY SUCH PROGRAM. PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW'S SUGGESTION FOR MIXED-NATION NAVAL FORCE IN ASIAN WATERS, INCLUDING JAPAN, WAS CONSCIOUSLY TREATED WITH CONSIDERABLE DIFFIDENCE IN JAPANESE PRESS, AND IS CLEARLY WELL BEYOND RANGE OF DISCUSSABLE REGIONAL SECURITY VENTURES AT PRESENT TIME.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS: IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR US TO ATTEMPT TO DEFINE POLITICAL AND SECURITY ROLE FOR JAPAN IN ASIA. NOR FOR THAT MATTER IS THERE ANY

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REASON FOR US TO ENCOURAGE JAPANESE TO THINK OF THEMSELVES PRIMARILY AS ASIAN POWER. GOJ IS WELL AWARE THAT JAPANESE COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL INTERESTS ARE INCREASINGLY GLOBAL RATHER THAN REGIONAL IN CHARACTER. WITH THIS IN MIND WE CAN AFFORD TO TAKE RELAXED ATTITUDE TOWARD JAPAN'S ROLE IN EAST ASIA. AT SAME TIME WE HAVE INTEREST IN SSURING CONTINUING CLOSE COORDINATION OF OUR POLICIES IN ASIA THROUGH REGULAR CONSULTATIONS. WE SHOULD UTILIZE DISCUSSIONS AT SUMMIT TO LEND IMPETUS TO THIS CONSULTATIVE PROCESS IN RELATION TO OUR RESPECTIVE POLICIES TOWARD PRC, USSR, AID TO INDOCHINA, AND KOREAN PENINSULA. WITH RESPECT TO JAPAN'S REGIONAL SECURITY ROLE, PRESS AND OPPOSITION ARE QUICK TO SEIZE ON ANY HINTS THAT US MAY WISH TO ENCOURAGE GOJ TO ASSUME OVERSEAS MILITARY RESPONSIBILITIES. RECENT STATEMENTS MADE BY DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CLEMENTS HAVE REKINDLED SUCH SPECULATION. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT SUMMIT COMMUNIQUE OFFERS OPPORTUNITY TO underscore FACT THAT IT IS NOT US POLICY TO PROPEL JAPAN INTO OVERSEAS MILITARY ROLE, AND TO MAKE POINT THAT OUR DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO CREATE STABLE EQUILIBRIUM IN WHICH JAPAN CAN MAINTAIN DEFENSE STRUCTURE CONSISTENT WITH ITS CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES AND POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES IN REGION.

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